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# THE BRITISH CABINET

A STUDY OF ITS PERSONNEL

1801 — 1924.

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BY

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# THE BRITISH CABINET.

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### I.

A full history of the English Cabinet would be one of the seminal works on the technique of representative government; for, as Bagehot was the first to point out, it has been the primary source of decision in the modern English institutional system. Few books, it must be added, would be so difficult to write. Until 1917, the Cabinet was without a secretary or authentic records; and there are even to-day purists who regret these obviously necessary innovations. What account we have of its working is thus necessarily spasmodic and partial in character. A statesman who took a note of some meeting where his Department was affected, a debate in the House of Commons after some dispute which has entailed resignation, a chance entry in a diary, the occasional revelations of autobiography, it is upon materials such as these that we are largely dependent for our knowledge. Even semi-official accounts, like those of Lord Morley and Mr. Gladstone, hardly give us more than the formal outline of the Cabinet as it functions.

Yet one clue to its character has been curiously neglected; and it illustrates, as it happens, the nature of the social system in England in a quite special way. We know the men who occupied Cabinet office; and by a careful study of who they were, we can at least draw some inferences of interest and even importance. These, let it be said at once, will not explain in any way the technique of the Cabinet system. But at least they will serve to measure the way in which the changes in the structure of English social life are reflected in the choice of those responsible for its effective governance.

The notes which follow are not intended to do more than point a way to the much more detailed analysis which requires to be made. They deal only with what may be called the modern period. They begin, that is to say, with the formation of the Addington administration in 1801; and they end with the Baldwin Government of 1924. They seek to answer certain obvious questions. Who were the men who entered the Cabinet in this century and a-quarter of history? Were they aristocrats or plebeians? What were their professions? Where were they educated? Is there a difference in the personnel of the Cabinet at one period and another? Does, for example, a widening of the franchise mean a widening of the area from which Cabinet ministers are chosen? Is there

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\* I am indebted to Mrs. A. Henderson and Mrs. L. Turin of the London School of Economics and Political Science for much help in the preparation of the tables which follow.



any difference in the type of men attracted to the service of the two parties, which until 1918, were the major political organisations in England? What is the main burden of the results discovered? What suggestions do they imply for the coming years?

Let us be clear, in the first place, about our definitions. The tables which follow will show how considerable and how prolonged has been the place of the aristocracy in the English Cabinet. How are we to fix the limit of that class? In England—very fortunately—there has never been an aristocracy of blood; all save the actual holders of peerages are, like the greengrocer and the bricklayer, commoners devoid of legal title to privilege. The English aristocracy, moreover, has always had a singular capacity, elsewhere unexampled, for absorbing external elements; lawyers, doctors, soldiers, sailors, business men and civil servants have been admitted within its confines. For the purposes, therefore, of this study the category has been defined as containing those Cabinet ministers who have been the sons of men possessing hereditary titles. On this definition, Sir Robert Peel was an aristocrat and Lord Brougham was not; the first Lord Selborne was not an aristocrat, while his son, the second Lord Selborne, was. It follows that the tables below are to some extent weighted against the aristocracy; for there are men who belong to ancient families, like Mr. Chichester Fortescue and Sir William Harcourt, who are excluded from that class. A word is necessary, also, upon the assignment of Cabinet ministers to their various professions. Those who are called lawyers, for example, do not include any except the men who definitely earned their livelihood as barristers or solicitors. Mr. Gladstone, for example, was called to the Bar, but as he never practised he finds no place among the lawyers. And, similarly, Macaulay, who practised on the Northern circuit for a few years (without success) is put, not among the lawyers, but, with Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton and Morley, among the men of letters on the ground that this was in fact his effective vocation. So, also, the category of soldiers and sailors includes men like St. Vincent and Wellington and Kitchener who were warriors *de carrière*; but it does not include the very large number of peers and their sons who spent a few brief years in the Guards or the Hussars without seeking seriously to make the naval or military profession their life-task. Where a Cabinet minister went to any British university, account has been taken of it; and where, as in the earlier part of the period it was not uncustomary, a statesman went both to Oxford or Cambridge and to a Scottish University (like Lord Henry Petty) he has been credited to both. For the category of public schools, apart from Eton and Harrow, nine of the principal schools have been investigated. Finally, in discussing the distribution of types among the political parties, Mr. Gladstone's first administration of 1868 has been taken



as the starting point on the ground that the present political labels date most effectively from that period.

## II.

In the period from 1801-1924 306 persons held Cabinet office.\* Table I. gives the salient particulars about them.

TABLE I.

	Number.
Sons of Nobility ... ..	182
Sons of other parents ... ..	124
Educated at Oxford ... ..	118
Educated at Cambridge ... ..	81
Educated at Eton ... ..	83
Educated at Harrow ... ..	36
Educated at other Public Schools ... ..	53
Educated at other Universities ... ..	26
Lawyers ... ..	42
Soldiers and Sailors ... ..	8
Business men ... ..	23
Civil Servants ... ..	3
Men of Letters and Journalists ... ..	9
Trade Unionists ... ..	8

The interest of this table is considerable. Nearly sixty per cent. of Cabinet ministers were born of immediately aristocratic parentage; sixty-five per cent. were either at Oxford or Cambridge; twenty-three per cent. were Eton men, and over ten per cent. from Harrow, while seventeen per cent. were from eleven other great public schools. Thirty per cent. only were dependent upon their own efforts for a livelihood, and, of these nearly half were lawyers. In part, that is to be expected since the legal profession, as organised in England, is much the most compatible with a parliamentary career; while business men are, as a rule, only able at a comparatively late stage of their careers to devote themselves to politics. It is noticeable that very few Civil Servants have ever attained the eminence of Cabinet rank; and that, thus far, the number of trade unionists is very small. Had this analysis, indeed, ended in 1905, it would have contained the name of no working man.

Broadly speaking, the aristocracy with which we are concerned consists of a thousand families; but the actual number from which Cabinet ministers have been drawn is much smaller. The Cecil family and its relatives, for example, have contributed six Cabinet ministers to the total; the House of Grey five; the House of Stanley four; four families have three Cabinet ministers each, and twenty-seven families two each. Among commoners, not unnaturally, no such persistent attain-

\* The Lloyd George War Cabinet is counted as having contained five members only. This seems the fairer procedure, as many of the offices were temporary, and many of their holders took no part in politics after the War.

ment of office exists. Two Gladstones, three Chamberlains, two Harcourts and two Balfours exhaust the list. The explanation, of course, is largely personal and economic. A considerable section of the English aristocracy enters Parliament at an early age; and they are thus able to take advantage both of family prestige and freedom from material care. With commoners this is much more rarely the case, unless as with the Chamberlains, the creation of an independent fortune makes devotion to business unnecessary.

The mere totals of this personnel do not, however, give an adequate picture of the evolution that has taken place. The period from 1801-1924 is divisible into certain well-marked epochs. There is the period (I.) from 1801-1831—the *ancien régime* of modern English politics. There is the period (II.) from 1832-1866 marked by the first Reform Act. There is the period from (III.) 1867-1884 marked by the second, and the period from 1885-1905 marked by the third Reform Act. In 1900 came the Taff Vale Decision and, as a consequence, the entry of the trade unions into politics as the Labour Party. This gives us another well-defined period (IV.) from 1906-1916, when the emergence of Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister reaped the fruits of the war period; the final epoch (V.) from 1917-1924 saw the acceptance of the Labour Party as the official opposition and its first experience of office. Each of these periods deserves separate analysis. For their explanation it should be noted that each minister is counted separately if he held office, as did men like Gladstone and Disraeli, in more than one period. A number of ministers, therefore, appear more than once in the tables which follow.

TABLE II.

Period I. 1801-1831. Total number of Ministers 71.

	Number.
Sons of nobility ... ..	52
Sons of other parents ... ..	19
Educated at Oxford ... ..	24
Educated at Cambridge ... ..	24
Educated at other Universities ... ..	7
Educated at Eton ... ..	20
Educated at Harrow ... ..	9
Educated at other Public Schools ... ..	13
Lawyers ... ..	4
Soldiers and Sailors ... ..	2
Business men ... ..	1
Civil Servants ... ..	1
Men of Letters and Journalists ... ..	0

Seventy-three per cent. of the Cabinet were, therefore, in this period aristocrats. Every Cabinet minister was a university man, and some sixty per cent. were public school men, of whom Eton provided half. Only one business man attained high office; and the small number of lawyers—all of whom

held legal posts, is explained by Lord Eldon's long tenure of the Chancellorship. Obviously, in this first period, the Cabinet was a closely-guarded preserve of the aristocracy.

TABLE III.

Period II. 1832-1866. Total number of Ministers 100.

	Number.
Sons of nobility ... ..	64
Sons of other parents ... ..	36
Educated at Oxford ... ..	38
Educated at Cambridge ... ..	30
Educated at other Universities ... ..	10
Educated at Eton ... ..	27
Educated at Harrow ... ..	11
Educated at other Public Schools ... ..	17
Lawyers ... ..	12
Soldiers and Sailors ... ..	3
Business men ... ..	5
Civil Servants ... ..	2
Men of Letters and Journalists ... ..	3

The period shows a slight decline (sixty-four per cent. to seventy-three per cent.) in the number of aristocrats; a slight decline, also, in the number of university men, as also a slight increase in the number of public school men. There is a perceptible increase in the number of lawyers (partly accounted for by rapid changes in the Chancellorship) and in the number of business men. Men of letters also appear effectively in the Cabinet for the first time. But, taken as a whole, it cannot be said that the Reform Act of 1832 exerted any remarkable influence on the character of the Cabinet.

Table IV. gives similar statistics for the period from 1867-1884.

TABLE IV.

Period III. 1867-1884. Total number of Ministers 58.

	Number.
Sons of nobility ... ..	35
Sons of other parents ... ..	23
Educated at Cambridge ... ..	12
Educated at Cambridge ... ..	12
Educated at other Universities ... ..	3
Educated at Eton ... ..	20
Educated at Harrow ... ..	5
Educated at other Public Schools ... ..	9
Lawyers ... ..	9
Soldiers and Sailors ... ..	1
Business men ... ..	6
Civil Servants ... ..	1
Men of Letters and Journalists ... ..	1

There is, again, a slight decline in aristocratic personnel (sixty per cent. to sixty-four per cent.) as compared with the second period; though, after two Reform Acts, the degree of its influence remains remarkable. Seventy-seven per cent. of ministers were university men, and sixty per cent. public school men. There is, proportionately, again a slight increase in the number of lawyers and business men.

Table V. gives the statistics for the period from 1885-1905:—

TABLE V.

Period IV. 1885-1905. Total number of Ministers 69.

	Number.
Sons of nobility ... ..	40
Sons of other parents ... ..	29
Educated at Oxford ... ..	35
Educated at Cambridge ... ..	17
Educated at other Universities ... ..	5
Educated at Eton ... ..	25
Educated at Harrow ... ..	9
Educated at other Public Schools ... ..	12
Lawyers ... ..	9
Soldiers and Sailors ... ..	0
Business men ... ..	6
Civil Servants ... ..	0
Men of Letters and Journalists ... ..	1

The percentage of the aristocracy (fifty-eight per cent.) is practically identical with that of the third period. The percentage of university men is eighty-three—an increase probably due to the reforms of 1854—and of public school men sixty-five. The other figures show no considerable divergences from those of the earlier period.

Table VI. gives the same statistics for the period from 1906-1916:—

TABLE VI.

Period V. 1906-1916. Total number of Ministers 51.

	Number.
Sons of nobility ... ..	25
Sons of other parents ... ..	26
Educated at Oxford ... ..	20
Educated at Cambridge ... ..	16
Educated at other Universities ... ..	5
Educated at Eton ... ..	12
Educated at Harrow ... ..	5
Educated at other Public Schools ... ..	8
Lawyers ... ..	9
Soldiers and Sailors ... ..	1
Business men ... ..	5
Civil Servants ... ..	0
Men of Letters and Journalists ... ..	3
Academic ... ..	1
Trade Unionists ... ..	2



In this period the most notable fact is that the number of aristocrats is, for the first time, less than the number of commoners. The number of university men remains broadly constant, but the number of public school men shows a distinct decline (from sixty-five per cent. to fifty per cent.). There is, also, an increase in the number of lawyers, and the category of trade unionists makes its first appearance. Broadly, it may be said that this is the first of the periods under discussion in which commoners begin obviously to gain upon the aristocracy. Whatever the measures of the nineteenth century, until 1906, the broadening of the franchise and the improvement of the means of education had not, in one hundred years of Cabinet history, seriously affected the hold of the aristocracy upon the pivotal posts of government.

Table VII. gives the statistics for the period from 1917 to 1924 :—

TABLE VII.

Period VI. 1917-1924. Total number of Ministers 52.						Number.
Sons of nobility ...	...	...	...	...	...	14
Sons of other parents ...	...	...	...	...	...	38
Educated at Oxford ...	...	...	...	...	...	18
Educated at Cambridge ...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Educated at other Universities ...	...	...	...	...	...	4
Educated at Eton ...	...	...	...	...	...	6
Educated at Harrow ...	...	...	...	...	...	8
Educated at other Public Schools ...	...	...	...	...	...	11
Lawyers ...	...	...	...	...	...	8
Soldiers and Sailors ...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Business men ...	...	...	...	...	...	4
Civil Servants ...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Men of Letters and Journalists ...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Academic ...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Trade Unionists ...	...	...	...	...	...	8

The changes represented by the foregoing table, which includes the members of the first Labour Government, are obviously profound. The aristocracy represents only twenty-seven per cent., the universities sixty, and the public schools only fifty per cent. of the total. There are as many trade unionists as lawyers; and there are twice as many lawyers as business men. Obviously enough, had there been two Labour Governments within the period, the influence of the aristocracy on the personnel of the Cabinet would have been small indeed. It is clear, further, that the position of the Labour Party in the House of Commons means that the decline in the percentage of university men is likely for a considerable period to be large; as also that the number of trade unionists is likely to remain fairly stable as at some such size as at least one-third of each Labour Cabinet.

## III.

The statistics may now be analysed from the angle of party. In the period since 1868—omitting the Coalition Government of 1917-22—there have been seven Conservative, seven Liberal, and one Labour, Governments; to which must be added the Asquith Coalition of 1915, in which only experienced, so to say, professional Parliamentarians found a place. Table VIII. gives the same statistics as in previous tables for the different parties involved:—

TABLE VIII. (1868—1924).

Name of Party :	Conservative.	Liberal.	Labour
Sons of Nobility ...	40	31	3
Sons of other parents ...	40	42	16
Educated at Oxford ...	38	28	3
Educated at Cambridge ...	16	23	2
Educated at other Universities ...	4	3	1
Educated at Eton... ..	31	14	0
Educated at Harrow ...	15	6	1
Educated at other Public Schools ...	13	12	3
Lawyers ... ..	15	17	2
Soldiers and Sailors ...	1	1	1
Business men ... ..	6	9	1
Civil Servants ... ..	0	1	1
Men of letters and Journalists	1	5	3
Academic .. ...	0	0	0
Trade Unionists ... ..	0	2	7

These figures suggest that no very considerable difference has existed between the Liberal and Conservative Parties in the period under review. A Conservative Cabinet tends to be slightly more aristocratic than a Liberal Cabinet and to specialise in the possession of ministers who have been at the great public schools. The only man of letters in a Conservative Cabinet was Disraeli; but the Liberals have five who earned their living by writing. The Labour Cabinet contained three aristocrats, one of whom—Lord Chelmsford—was not a member of the party; and it is notable as having been the first Cabinet since 1801 which contained no Eton man. Certain other conclusions suggest themselves. Apart from Mr. John Burns—since Mr. Arthur Henderson's appointment was an accident of the war period—no trade unionist has ever sat in either a Conservative or a Liberal Cabinet; and there exists to-day no member of Parliament belonging to a trade union who—apart from a Coalition Government—would be likely to find a place there.



It is interesting from this angle to take a number of Cabinets in detail since 1868, and to compare them with one another. For this purpose I have tabulated (Table IX.) Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet of 1868, Mr. Disraeli's of 1874, Mr. Balfour's of 1900, Mr. Asquith's of 1908, and Mr. Baldwin's of 1924; Mr. MacDonald's Cabinet being put alongside for the purposes of comparison:—

TABLE IX.

Name of Government :	Gladstone (1868).	Disraeli (1874).	Balfour (1902)	Asquith (1908).	MacDonald (1924).	Baldwin (1924).
Sons of Nobility ...	8	10	12	6	3	9
Sons of other parents ...	11	7	11	14	17	12
Educated at Oxford ...	10	9	11	7	3	12
Educated at Cambridge ...	3	2	6	8	2	4
Educated at other Universities ...	1	1	1	1	1	1
Educated at Eton ...	3	9	11	4	0	5
Educated at Harrow ...	0	1	2	3	2	6
Educated at other Public Schools ...	5	2	5	4	4	4
Lawyers ...	3	2	4	6	2	6
Soldiers and Sailors ...	0	0	0	0	1	0
Business men ...	4	1	2	2	1	2
Civil Servants ...	1	0	0	0	1	0
Men of Letters and Journalists ...	0	1	0	1	3	0
Trade Unionists ...	0	0	0	1	8	0

Obviously there are no very great differences between these Cabinets, apart from the Labour Government. It will be noticed that, apart from the Asquith Cabinet of 1908, and that of Mr. MacDonald, the number of ministers dependent for their living upon their vocation is small; in no case other than the two noted is it more than one-third of the total Cabinet. Again there is a tendency for Liberal Cabinets to be slightly less aristocratic than Conservative. The effective predominance of Eton men among Conservative ministers is remarkable; and it is amusing to note that a Conservative Prime Minister educated at Eton, Lord Balfour, had colleagues almost half of whom were Eton men, while the Cabinet of a Harrow Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin, has in it the largest number of Harrow men ever collected in a single Cabinet. Mr. Gladstone's administration of 1868 was the first Cabinet in which no Harrovian, that of Mr. MacDonald the first in which no Etonian, found a place.

## IV.

Certain general characteristics of the figures here collected may be noted. In our period, 306 persons held Cabinet office, and of them 182 were aristocrats. But, if we subtract from the 306 the 93 who earned their living, no less than 213, or practically seventy per cent., were rentiers. Not less

remarkable is the small number of professions from which the Cabinet has been drawn. Outside the rentiers, practically five categories exhaust the list. No scientist, no engineer, and no doctor\* has ever been a member of the Cabinet; and, with the exception of Mr. Herbert Fisher whose appearance was an accident of the War, no academic person, though, for a brief period, both Robert Lowe and Viscount Gladstone were university dons.

It is interesting to discover the parental occupations of the non-aristocratic members of the Cabinet in the period. Table X. gives these for the 124 persons who form this class:

TABLE X.

Parental Occupation.						Number.
Soldiers and Sailors	...	...	...	...	...	6
Lawyers ...	...	...	...	...	...	18
Business men	...	...	...	...	...	36
Clergy ...	...	...	...	...	...	20
Teachers ...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Doctors ...	...	...	...	...	...	4
Men of Letters	...	...	...	...	...	1
Artists ...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Civil Servants	...	...	...	...	...	1
Renters ...	...	...	...	...	...	23
Working men	..	..	...	...	...	12

From this table certain obvious conclusions emerge. It is clear, in the first place, that the distribution of occupations among the parents of Cabinet ministers is wider than among the ministers themselves. That business men should form the largest parental class is notable. But it is probably explained by the fact that most of them, like the Goschens and Chamberlains and Peases, were successful business men who were able either to support their sons during a parliamentary career—as Tierney—or to give them an education which permitted an alternative career like the law. The number of clergymen is explained partly by the fact that some of them, as Sir William Harcourt's father, were connections of ancient families and thus able to command political influence, and partly by the fact that all of them were able to give their sons a university education; most, in fact, were comfortably endowed. The number of rentiers, which here includes members of "county" families, is comparatively small; though had this investigation been concerned only with membership of the House of Commons, or even with minor ministerial posts, it would have been very much larger. It is worth remarking that, apart from Mr. John Burns and Mr. Henderson, no member of any Cabinet previous to that of Mr. MacDonald was the son of a working man.

I have spoken above of the educational training of Cabinet

\* Dr. Addison was, of course, Minister of Health under Mr. Lloyd George, but his appointment was hardly less abnormal than that of Mr. Fisher.

Ministers, and it is perhaps worth while to examine the statistics in some little detail. Among the 118 Oxford men in the list, no less than sixteen colleges are represented. But sixty of the Oxford Cabinet ministers were at Christ Church, and Balliol, which is next in the list, has only seventeen, being closely followed by Oriel with twelve, and University with ten, respectively. Within these figures, one or two facts are worth noting. The predominance of Christ Church is almost entirely due to its aristocratic connection, particularly in the period before 1867; since that time its degree of representation has declined. Of the Balliol men, all, except one, date from the epoch of Jowett. The Oriel men are mostly confined within the period when Hawkins and Copleston had made it the outstanding college in Oxford; while nearly half of the representation from University College is due to the Cecil family. Of the Cambridge results somewhat similar remarks may be made. Of the eighty-one Cambridge men who attained Cabinet rank, fifty-four came from Trinity alone. St. John's has eleven, and Trinity Hall five, the remainder being distributed among six colleges. In view of its influence in the University, and especially its connection with Eton, it is a little surprising to find that only two Cabinet ministers came from King's College. Of the ministers educated at other universities nine were from Edinburgh, and six from London. It is notable that except for Mr. Neville Chamberlain's brief attendance at Birmingham University, no Cabinet minister has been so far produced by one of the newer university institutions.

There is another aspect of interest from which these figures may be analysed. Dividing Cabinet ministers into aristocrats and commoners, Table XI. gives their age at entrance into the House of Commons and the Cabinet in three periods within the last century and a quarter.

TABLE XI.

	Period : 1801-1867.	Period : 1867-1905.	Period : 1905-1924.	Govern- ment of Mr. Bald- win.	Govern- ment of Mr. Mac- Donald.
Age of entrance of Aristocrats into House of Commons ... ..	25.5	26.5	29	31.2	32.5
Age of entrance of Aristocrats into the Cabinet.	45.9	43.4	44.5	44	55
Age of entrance of Commoners into House of Commons ... ..	35.9	38.7	40	42.8	43.4
Age of entrance of Commoners into the Cabinet.	55	52.7	54.4	51.1	57.6

From this table three obvious conclusions can be drawn. Aristocrats, firstly, enter the House of Commons and the Cabinet ten years earlier, on the average, than commoners. The average age, secondly, at which men enter the House of Commons is rising for both classes; for aristocrats it has risen from 25 to 29, and for commoners from 35.9 to 40. The average age, thirdly, at which aristocrats entered the Cabinet has slightly declined during the period, as is true also, the MacDonald Cabinet apart, with commoners. The high average age at which aristocrats in Mr. MacDonald's Cabinet first received such office is, of course, due to quite exceptional circumstances. What is mainly remarkable in the whole table is the immense differential advantage in time which an aristocratic politician receives by reason of his birth.

### V.

"In England," wrote Matthew Arnold some fifty years ago,\* "the Government is composed of a string of aristocratical personages, with one or two men from the professional class who are engaged with them." Of the English Cabinet system until 1905 this is no unfair account; and, if since that time, the generalisation has lost some part of its force, it is still by no means negligible.

For anyone who reflects upon the statistics here collected will be driven to certain irresistible inferences. The three Reform Acts of the nineteenth century made little essential difference to the position of the aristocracy in politics. Policy may have changed, but the men who made policy came in much the same degree from the same origins as their predecessors. Even to-day, the aristocracy, together with the lawyer and the rentier, still possesses a predominance in the personnel of English politics. Though the advent of the Labour Party has altered for the moment the proportion of that predominance, it is by no means certain that it will not continue. For, in the first place, the Labour Party needs lawyers, and accordingly, offers better prospects of speedy appointment to office than either of its rivals. If, moreover, Labour remains the alternative government, it will attract the more radical-minded members of the aristocracy in the same way that the Liberal Party used to do; and in that event, especially if the House of Lords remains unreformed, the aristocratic member of the Labour Party will have the same, if not greater, opportunities than he retains elsewhere. This thesis, of course, rests upon the assumption that there is no drastic alteration in the laws of property and inheritance.

For the root of the hold retained by the members of the aristocracy is economic in character. In part, and perhaps mainly, it is derived from the possession of an income which renders them independent of the need to earn a living. In a lesser degree, the territorial influence of the aristocracy enables

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\* Mixed Essays, p. 164.



it to find seats for its members with less difficulty, and at an earlier age, than is possible for other classes. The only real competitors of the rentier in the Conservative Party are the lawyers; for, as has been pointed out, the number of vocations compatible with politics is small, and unless business men have independent means they enter the House of Commons (even more, the House of Lords) too late to embark upon a political career which may lead them to the Cabinet. It is worth while noting, moreover, that until 1905 this was also true of the Liberal Party; and, since that date, it is significant that the leaders of that party were either lawyers or men of independent means. Nor are there signs that, so far as the Conservative Party is concerned, the change is a great one. The party contained, in November, 1926, 410 members. Of these fifty-three were lawyers, fifty-three aristocrats, and 129 rentiers; while eighteen were retired soldiers and sailors, and, of the remainder, more than eighty were possessed of means other than their vocational source of income. And, as in the case of Cabinet ministers, there was a difference in average age in the party between aristocrats and commoners of more than ten years. Nor is it insignificant that most of those likely to attain office in the Cabinet in the coming years belong to the three special classes noted.

The position of the business and working classes in the system is peculiar and interesting. The House of Commons has always, since 1832, contained a very considerable proportion of business men, and, since 1895, an increasing proportion. There is, however, no sign that they are likely to enter the Cabinet in any increasing degree. They enter the House too late to make a sufficient impression upon its leaders; and they cannot, like members of the Labour Party, rest satisfied with the standard of life which a Member of Parliament's salary makes possible. Where they are outstandingly successful, on the other hand, their sons not seldom enter the House and, later, the Cabinet. A business man, therefore, can, within the ambit of our system, found a dynasty of rentiers to whom the Cabinet will lie open, even while he can hardly hope to enter it himself.

The position of the Labour member is different. The salary of a Member of Parliament, with the possibility further of a supplementary income from his trade union, offers the very considerable trade-union section of the party the chance of a fairly long parliamentary career at a standard of life which they regard as comfortable. For this section, however, the drawbacks are two in number from the angle of office. The period which must elapse before the average trade-unionist can hope for a safe seat from his party sends him into the House later than most other members; while defeat at a general election may, unless he is an official of his union, find him

without employment.\* He is, moreover, rarely in a position to send his children into the House of Commons; Mr. Henderson is, so far, the only Labour Member who has sat in the House with his own sons. The non-trade union section of the Labour Party is, with the exception of the Clyde group, in much the same position as members of the other parties. They are lawyers, rentiers, teachers, doctors, and their ability to pursue a parliamentary career depends upon the same considerations as affect the Conservative or the Liberal. The number of professions compatible with a political career is limited; and, broadly, the trade-union official in the Labour Party has the same kind of advantage as the rentier or the lawyer.

A word should be said about the influence of the universities. It has obviously been profound. But, also, it is in a large degree secondary in character, since the men who went to the universities are, for the most part, the men who would in any case have entered the House. Where the university has counted is in the connections it has formed for men who, otherwise, would not have found the avenue to the House as direct as they did. Gladstone's Oxford friendship with Lord Lincoln gave him the opportunity of Newark; without it, he might have had to wait much longer for a seat. And it is clear that neither London, nor the provincial and Scottish universities, carry with them the same social connotation as Oxford and Cambridge. The claim that these are the nurseries of statesmen means but little in the sense that the art of government can be acquired there. But in the sense that they open avenues more easily for those not of the aristocracy the claim is not to be denied. They are an integral part of that government by connection which is still influential in England.

The broad fact is that political democracy in England has still developed very imperfectly. There is no large equality of opportunity. Were similar tables to these compiled for the Cabinets of France since 1870 and the United States since 1789, the results would show an immense difference. In France the Government of the Third Republic has been drawn almost entirely from the professional and middle classes; in the United States, though there was a considerable aristocratic and rentier element before the Civil War, the basis of government has been even wider than in France. Neither in America nor in France has the mind and imagination of the middle and working classes been subdued by the aristocracy as they have been in this country. Our liberty has not been paralleled by equality: and the conditions of our political institutions maintain that submission to the aristocracy by reason of the economic system they involve.

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\* One Labour ex-Member of Parliament was compelled, in 1924, to apply for unemployment relief.



It is, of course, idle to seek to measure the degree of permanence in our present methods. Any aristocratic system which, like the English, has had a considerable degree of public spirit, has obvious and great advantages over a purely democratic system. Its members are trained to the art of politics at an early age; and they acquire more easily than others the faculty of command and the ability to use other men gracefully which are so important. Yet they possess it at a heavy price to the rest of the community. For an aristocracy, however public spirited, is by its nature exclusive; and the experience it knows at first-hand is bound to be unduly narrow. In a state like our own where the equal claim of men on the common good is the touchstone of policy, the differential advantages which the present order implies make against the full understanding of wants by those who are called to rule. The English aristocracy, moreover, has long passed the zenith of its power. It no longer has a monopoly of the qualities which make for effective governance. It may even be said that the problems which confront civilisation to-day are of a kind which call less for the qualities of an aristocracy than almost any others that can be imagined.

If we are, indeed, to place the full experience of our society at its service, the barriers of privilege which we still, as here shown, retain, are not merely anomalous, but even undesirable. We are still living by what Matthew Arnold called our religion of inequality. We still offer special advantages in the search for power to those whose interest it is to prevent the democratisation of the present order. To change it, doubtless, is a delicate and difficult business, since it involves an alteration in the distribution of wealth and inheritance. Yet no society can genuinely humanise its institutions save as it becomes a community of equals. Equality alone can breed responsibility and elevation of mind in the multitude. Our system confers those habits upon a small number of men; but the privileges it offers to birth and wealth prevent their extension to the masses. For when new ideas are changing the perspective of men's habit of thought, those can most usefully exercise power who see their implication. It is the thesis of our system to open the road to authority less to these men than to those sections of society who have most to lose by their introduction and acceptance.

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